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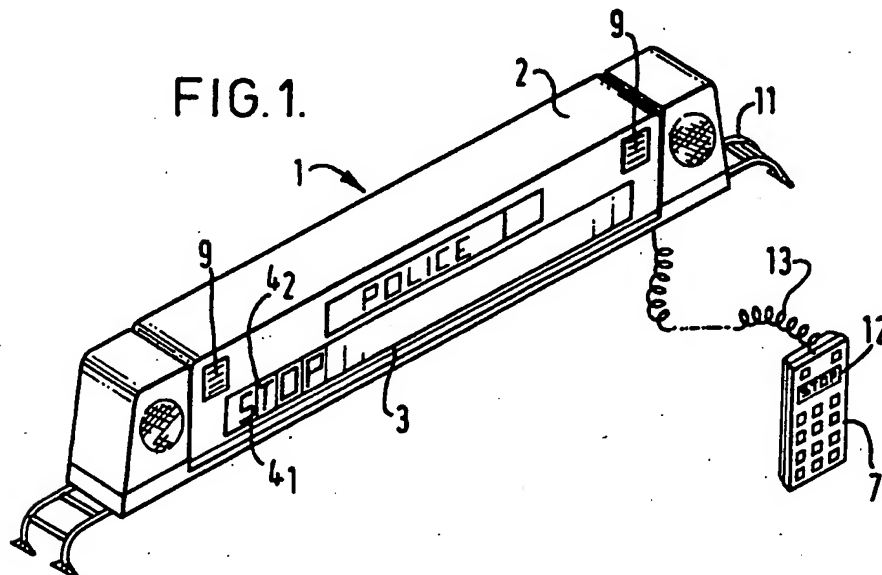
(58) Field of search

G5C

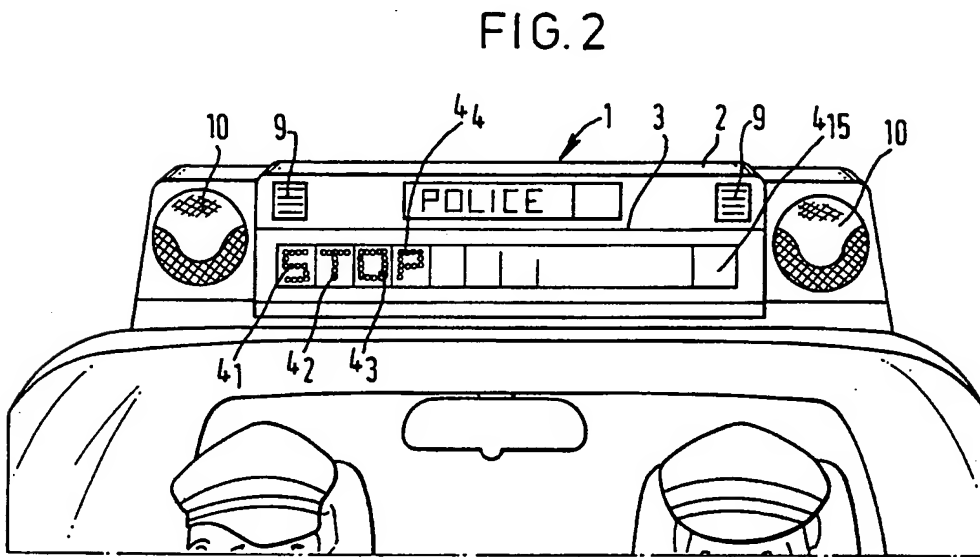
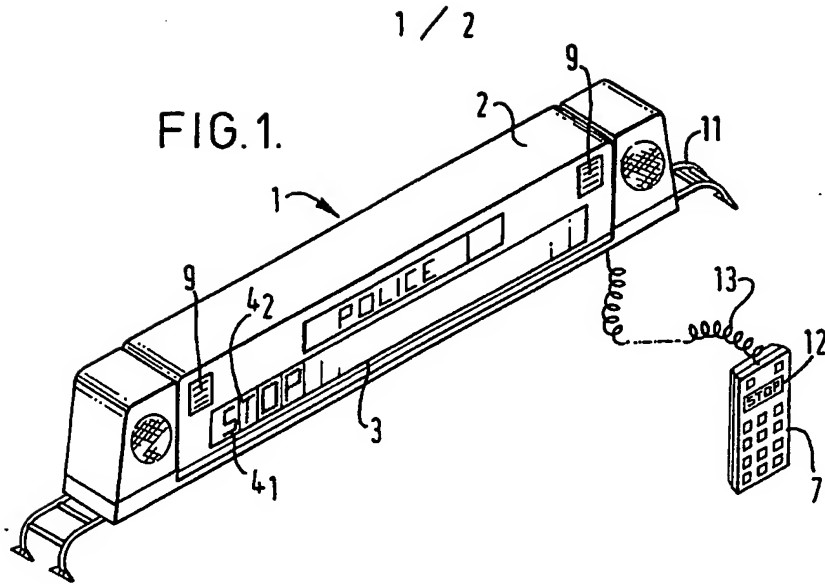
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(54) A signalling system for a vehicle

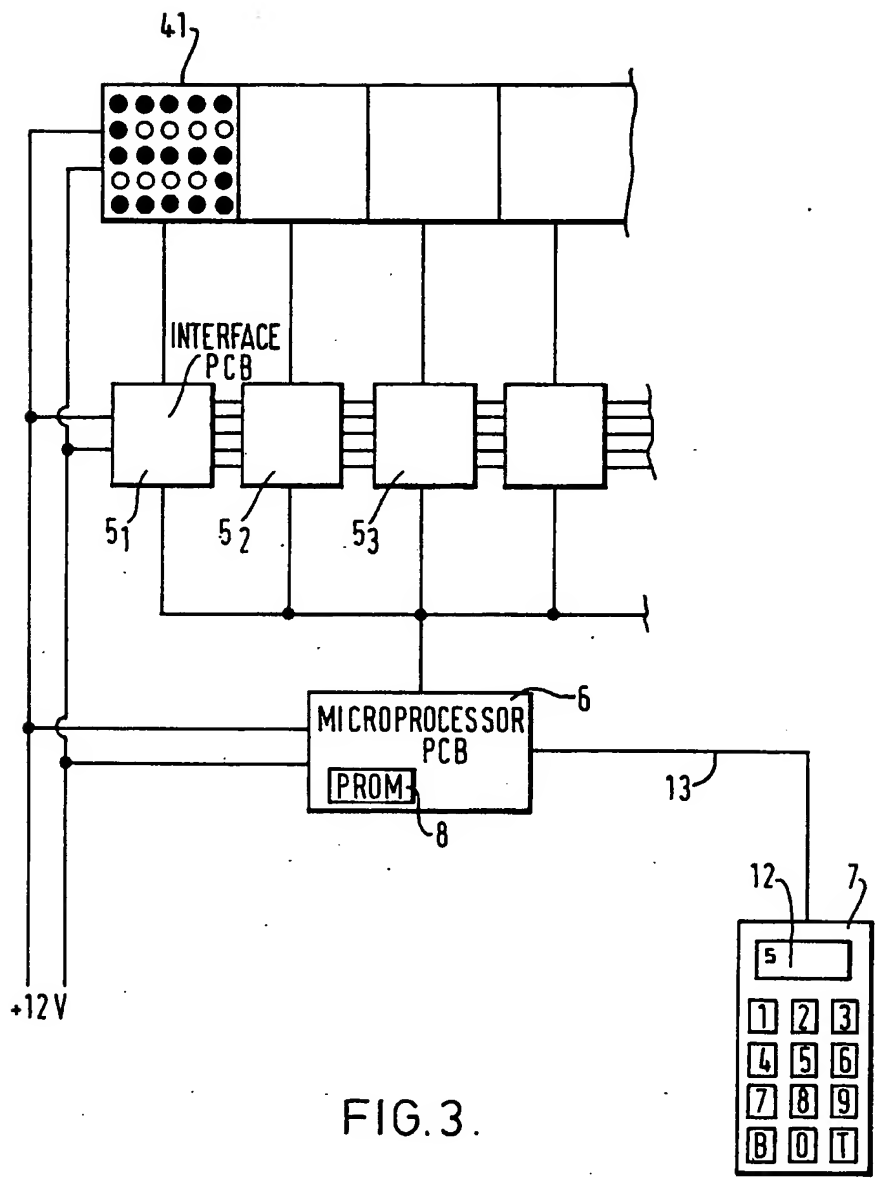
(57) A signalling system for a vehicle, comprises: a first device (1) for mounting on or in a vehicle, the device including a plurality of light-emissive devices (4₁, 4₂, . . .); first means, for actuating selected ones of the light-emissive devices to display a message; and second means, for supplying the first means with control information to actuate such selected ones of the light-emissive devices in accordance with input information characteristic of the message to be displayed. The light emissive devices may be lamps or LEDs. The main microprocessor may include a PROM for storing a plurality of messages. A hand-held switchboard unit may be provided for manual selection.



GB 2 175 428 A



2 / 2



SPECIFICATION

A signalling system for a vehicle

- 5 According to the present invention there is provided a signalling system for a vehicle, comprising: a first device for mounting on or in a vehicle, the device including a plurality of light-emissive devices; first means, for actuating selected ones of the light-emissive devices to display a message; and second means, for supplying the first means with control information to actuate such selected ones of the light-emissive devices in accordance with input information characteristic of the message to be displayed.

The said first device could be for mounting on the roof of a vehicle.

- 20 The said light-emissive devices could be incandescent lamps.

- The said light-emissive devices could comprise arrays of such devices, the devices of each array being selectively actuatable for displaying an alpha-numeric character. In this case, the said first means could comprise a respective interface circuit for each array.

- The said second means could comprise a microprocessor storing information for actuating selected ones of the light-emissive devices in dependence on different messages which may be displayed. In this case, the second means could further comprise a device (for example a push-button device), within or without the vehicle, for supplying the microprocessor with information characteristic of such different messages. Such a push-button device could be in the form of hand-held keyboard unit.

- The present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 shows a signalling unit for mounting on the roof of a vehicle, and its hand-held operating unit;

- 45 Figure 2 shows the signalling unit on the roof of a vehicle; and

Figure 3 shows electronic circuitry of the signalling unit in block diagrammatic form for controlling the unit via the hand-held unit.

- 50 The system to be described includes two units, namely a 15 character signalling display unit for mounting on a vehicle roof and a remote hand-held keyboard control unit located within the vehicle.

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a) Display Unit

- The display unit 1 comprises a housing 2 of polycarbonate type material which houses an aluminium lamp assembly panel 3. There are fifteen identical lamp arrays 4, to 4₁₅ attached to the panel 3, to provide for a fifteen character alpha-numeric display. Each array comprises a 5 row by 5 row matrix of 12 volt, 5 watt incandescent bulbs (25 lamps per character) retained by bayonet-type lamp holders

hardwired to respective ones of interface printed circuit boards 5, to 5₁₅, mounted at the bases of the arrays.

- Each interface printed circuit board (PCB) will decode character select instructions received from a main microprocessor based printed circuit board 6, mounted adjacent the display panel 3 in the unit 1.

- The main microprocessor printed circuit board 6 will process all instructions from a hand-held keyboard unit 7 and also contains a programmable read only memory (PROM) integrated circuit 8 which contains all the pre-defined messages to be displayed. The PROM 8 is mounted in a 'zero insertion force' (ZIF) connector, thus enabling future 'change of message' requirements to be carried out by simple and easy removal/replacement of the PROM.

- 85 A lamp diffuser panel, red in colour, masks all bulbs and printed circuit boards, and provision for fitment of loudspeakers 9 for audible signalling is made within the housing 2 (which additionally or alternatively may include searchlights). Additional warning lamps 10 may be incorporated at opposite ends of the display panel.

- The display unit 1 is powered from the vehicle's battery (heavy duty type) either by a permanently wired installation, or via a cigar lighter or similar device.

- The display unit may be available in two versions, namely a permanently mounted unit attached to the vehicle roof or a removable unit attached to a 'clamp on' type roof-rack assembly 11 (see Fig. 1). Anti-vibration rubbers may be incorporated in both types of mounting arrangement.

- 105 b) Keyboard Unit

- The hand-held keyboard unit 7 has a liquid crystal display 12, providing verification of the main display message as displayed by the lamp arrays 4, to 4₁₅ and determined by the code for that message sent to the microprocessor board 6 by pressing a sequence of push-button switches of the unit 7. The keyboard unit 7 is connected to the display unit 1 by means of a telephone-type extending cable 13 fitted with a weatherproof connector assembly.

- Ten of the push button switches are numbered 0 to 9 and allow selected ones of up to 100 different messages to be displayed. A printed message sheet defining each code and the related message may be attached to the rear of the keyboard unit.

- A variable intensity switch for the lamps is incorporated into the keyboard unit 7 and also a switch for testing the lamps. Also, switches may be incorporated into the unit 7 for enabling the message to 'roll' or flash/rep at.

- The display unit 1 could alternatively be mounted on the boot or the rear parcel shelf of the vehicle for example.

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Instead of being incandescent lamps, the light-emissive devices could be light-emissive diodes for example.

5 CLAIMS

1. A signalling system for a vehicle, comprising: a first device for mounting on or in a vehicle, the device including a plurality of light-emissive devices; first means, for actuating
10 selected ones of the light-emissive devices to display a message; and second means, for supplying the first means with control information to actuate such selected ones of the
15 light-emissive devices in accordance with input information characteristic of the message to be displayed.
2. A system according to claim 1, wherein the said first device is for mounting on the roof of a vehicle.
- 20 3. A system according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the said light-emissive devices are incandescent lamps.
4. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the said light-emissive devices
25 comprise arrays of such devices, the devices of each array being selectively actuatable for displaying an alpha-numeric character.
5. A system according to claim 4, wherein the said first means comprises a respective
30 interface circuit for each array.
6. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the said second means comprises a microprocessor storing information for actuating selected ones of the light-emissive
35 devices in dependence on different messages which may be displayed.
7. A system according to claim 6, wherein the second means further comprises a control device within or without the vehicle, for supplying the microprocessor with information
40 characteristic of such different messages.
8. A system according to claim 7, wherein the said control device comprises a push-button device.
- 45 9. A system according to claim 8, wherein the push-button device comprises a hand-held keyboard unit.
10. A signalling system for a vehicle, substantially as herein described with reference to
50 the accompanying drawings.